ERIC Document Resume	See Instruction Sheet	DATE OF RESUME	DATE RECEIVED

A. PUBLICATION DATA

1. ERIC NUMBER	2. ORIGINATOR CONTROL NO(S).	3. IDENTIFICATION NO.
ED001848	N.A.	N.A.

DO NOT WRITE IN SPACE BELOW

4. AUTHOR(S): Tannenbaum, Abraham J.

5. TITLE OF DOCUMENT ABSTRACTED: Recent Trends in the Education of the Gifted

6. PUBLICATION TITLE: The Educational Forum

MICROFILM COPY AVAILABLE YES ☒ NO ☐

COPYRIGHT GRANTED YES ☒ NO ☐

COPYRIGHT RELEASE FILED YES ☒ NO ☐

TYPE OF REPORT
PROPOSAL ☐
IN-PROGRESS ☐
FINAL ☒
FOLLOW-UP ☐

OTHER ERIC REFERENCES:

ERIC SATELLITE CODE

7. EDITOR(S):	8. PLACE OF ORIGIN
N.A.	Columbia University ORG. New York, New York ST. CITY, STATE
9. PUBLISHER OR SOURCE: The Educational Forum	TELE. EXT. INST/LOC CODE

10. VOL.	11. PAGES	12. MO./YR.	13. TOTAL PP.
N.A.	333-344	March 1962	11

B. INDEXING DATA

14. SUBJECT AREA

15. TYPE OF ENDEAVOR: Report

16. INDEXING TERMS (6-12)

students, gifted	research opportunities			
enrichment	science careers			
culturally deprived	acceleration			

17. ABSTRACT (MAX. 250 WORDS)

Recent trends in education of the gifted are presented. Provisions for gifted students are to continue and expand; however emphasis should be shifted from merely promoting the needs of the gifted to solidifying the gains already made in this direction. Enrichment brings new disciplines into the curriculum, and new courses are developed in such areas as anthropology, mathematics, psychology and geopolitics. Regular courses of study are compressed, stiffened, and telescoped, or given earlier than usual.

Mechanized teaching and early instruction in foreign language are beneficial to the gifted. Teaching machines transmit certain rote skills to children more rapidly and efficiently than conventional methods; and language laboratories offer an aural-oral approach so that students develop greater facility.

Many gifted youth plan to enter fields of science and technology, with a lessening of interest in the humanities. The search for talent in rural districts and among culturally deprived groups has grown; examples include the P.S. 43 Project in New York City, the Lewis County Project, and the Catskill Area Project. Research on the nature and development of talent has increased, with more schools planning projects in this field.

ERIC No.

18. SOURCE OF ABSTRACT

C. FUNDING DATA

19. SUPPORTING ORGANIZATION	20. DIVISION OR DEPT.	21. CONTRACT NO. PROJECT NO.
	22. TOTAL COST OF PROJECT	
	23. DURATION OF PROJECT	U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare Office of Education

ERIC Form 1

ED001848

Recent Trends in the Education of the Gifted

ABRAHAM J. TANNENBAUM

ANY ATTEMPT at probing beneath the surface of current events in the education of the gifted and interpreting their promise for the future is bound to be highly subjective. For trends, like beauty, are in the eyes of the beholder. An observer invariably allows his prejudices free play in such a survey and the result is a strictly personalized account of what is real and what is apparent, what is significant and what is trivial, what is promising and what is foreboding. Another observer might perceive the same scene quite differently, which suggests that a report of trends reveals more perhaps about the reporter than about the trends.

The problem of analyzing educational news is especially knotty when it deals with the fortunes of the talented in our public schools. Here the scene is constantly changing and the activity energetic, some of it reminiscent of a rocking chair in continual movement but going nowhere. Much disagreement still exists as to what constitutes special provisions and who has a right to take advantage of them. Even the term "gifted" or "talented" is defined differently by different educators. The present report, therefore, proposes no value judgments as to what may justifiably be regarded as enrichment and who may qualify as beneficiaries. Instead, it accepts into its focus *any* programs reported by local schools as "special" and *any* students meeting the criteria of superiority established in their own schools even though these same provisions and criteria may not necessarily be acceptable in schools elsewhere.

But whereas local biases are diversified, alternatives for a general approach to selection and programming remain somewhat limited. Schools either modify, supplement, or move rapidly through conventional subject matter, although implementation of these strategies varies endlessly. Identification procedures are also uniform to some degree, for they consistently involve formal measures of general ability and classroom performance plus an informal appraisal by the classroom teacher, with minimum standards and weights of emphasis depending largely on individual school policy.

So, within broad limits there is great variety, which makes it impossible to answer such basic questions as "How, specifically, is giftedness defined in our public schools?" and "What, in simple terms, is meant by enrichment?" For the purposes of this report the reply can only be that definitions vary from school to school and that all definitions are accepted for inclusion in the current trends in the education of the gifted.

THE EDUCATIONAL FORUM - MARCH 1962

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U. S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION AND WELFARE
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Trend #1: Provisions for the Gifted Continue to Expand

Concern for the development of high-level talent in this country continues to be front page news. Educators everywhere are exerting powerful efforts toward breaking the lock-step barrier to talent fruition, and the payoff at this point seems promising. More and more courses of study in local elementary and secondary schools are being tailor-made to suit the capacities of pupils regarded as able. In short, there is hardly a school official in a position of responsibility who stubbornly equates "equality" with "sameness" in reference to educational opportunity.

This surge toward providing for individual differences at the upper ability levels was even more intensive during the past year than ever before, as indicated by a State-wide survey conducted by the New York State Teachers Association. Of the 460 local schools and school systems responding to a questionnaire on provisions for the gifted 59 (some 13 percent), indicated they were inaugurating special programs for the first time in 1959-60, while only 3 (less than one percent) reported dropping existing ones. Needless to say, most of the others had programs in existence for the past two years or longer, although the exact proportion may not reflect that of the total sample of schools in New York.

Tangible evidence of interest in the gifted can readily be seen in the continuing proliferation of enrichment materials. Local schools are still producing special instructional outlines in an effort to cater to the unique needs of their able students. Many such bulletins represent only "paper programs" of uneven quality that have hardly affected the life of the classroom. Some, however, testify to remarkable changes being made in the educational diet of the mentally superior. Even in cases where enrichment plans are hardly imaginative or are frozen in the planning stages there is often a sincerity of purpose that cannot fail to be translated into some action.

Perhaps the most impressive feature of some programs for the gifted is that they concentrate on basic essences of quality education. Teachers are diverting emphasis from superficial fact mastery and discouraging able students from glibness and dilettantism. Instead, a deep respect for scholarship is being fostered through concentration on critical and creative thinking, hypothesis building, separating fact from assertion, and learning about learning.

Yet, despite the obvious benefits accruing to the gifted from special efforts on their behalf, there are also danger signals that cannot be ignored. In too many instances school officials give the impression of riding on a bandwagon that is destined to lose speed and grind to a halt. Though their programs for the gifted are often impressive, instead of blending into the general pattern of school life, these provisions are introduced as mere icing on the conventional cake. Desirable and luxurious as they may be, especially at a time when the public clamors for them, they smack of educational faddism rather than contributions of lasting value. Some have been inspired and designed by single individ-

uals in various school systems and apparently depend solely on the presence of these persons for survival. Others came into being not out of recognition of the special needs of the gifted but because the community demanded them and was willing to pay the bill. In view of this apparent shallowness of purpose in too many cases there is need for leadership in helping more programs for the gifted sprout roots and become self-perpetuating. The time has come to shift emphasis from merely *promoting* the needs of the gifted to *solidifying* the gains already made in this direction. For despite the unprecedented number of schools making special provisions for able children and youth, the potential for endurance of many such programs remains as yet uncertain.

Trend #2: Enrichment Brings New Disciplines into the Curriculum

As part of the movement toward enriching the learning experiences of the gifted, educators have rapidly developed new courses of study on the secondary level especially. Such subject matter has never before been encountered by pre-college students, at least not to the extent that it is being dealt with enthusiastically today. Merely a small sample of these offerings provides some flavor of the challenge and excitement that is taking place. There are courses in Electronics, The Mathematics of Science, Opera Production, Seminar in the Humanities, Integration of the Arts, World Affairs, Structural Linguistics, Critical Thinking, and many others.

In most instances, to be sure, these courses hardly represent permanent innovations to the curriculum. Instead, they are regarded as luxuries in the sense that students are encouraged to take them as electives without credit or formal recognition in much the same way they can choose to engage in extra-curricular activities. As such these offerings may vanish from the educational scene as quickly as they appeared on it. However, the simple fact that they *are* now being tried out with pride and determination may in itself be a hopeful sign for educators faced with the question of what the pre-college curriculum (for the gifted *and* non-gifted) should include in coming years. This becomes a vital question when one considers the incredible rate at which human knowledge is expanding and deepening. In the physical sciences, half of what is known today was largely unknown a bit over a decade ago; and more than ninety percent of today's medical prescriptions could not be filled only twenty years ago. In creative literature, the novel, the poem, and the drama of today carry messages that are strikingly different from the literature of the thirties and forties. Mathematicians are introducing such new terminology as "Set Theory" and "Topology" in the elementary and secondary curriculums despite the fact that most teachers in these grades have never encountered such terms even in their advanced schooling. The current socio-political scene places new emphasis on the southern and eastern hemispheres, areas of the world relatively neglected in our school curriculum. And a shrink-

ing globe seems to be forcing foreign language study into the early grades in an effort to produce a multi-lingual generation capable of understanding once-distant cultures in their native tongues.

These dramatic changes raise some serious questions about the content of our traditional academic courses of study. Much of what is now regarded as fundamental for most students may, upon keen evaluation, not be seen as basic to a curriculum for the gifted. In an age of electronic computers it is possible that mastery of the binary system by those who will eventually use these instruments is as important as knowledge of the decimal system even in the elementary grades. What is needed, then, is a brave reassessment of current courses of study unfettered by smug allegiance to the kinds of education that may have been valid in another era, or even for another ability group today. Beyond this re-examination of content in the present curriculum, we may well question ourselves as to whether new courses, traditionally not part of pre-college schooling, ought not to be considered for formal rather than luxurious inclusion in a program for the talented. Elements of some of the "newer" disciplines, such as anthropology, sociology, psychology, and geopolitics, among others, may indeed belong in the academic diet of tomorrow's talented high school student.

Trend #3: Courses of Study are being Telescoped and Stiffened

Courses in Advanced Standing have taken hold more firmly in the eastern part of the country than elsewhere. High School students taking these electives receive either college credit for them or register for advanced work in college without need of freshman prerequisites. Thus, five years of work can be telescoped into four and the high schools can provide acceleration while keeping a four year attendance requirement intact.

Elementary schools are also exploring the possibilities of accelerating, though not shortening, the stay of able pupils in their six year program. Based on evidence regarding the gifted child's early readiness for schoolwork, some school administrators have begun looking into the possibilities of lowering age requirements for admission of able pupils to the first grade. Acceleration would then be achieved by enabling students to complete a conventional block of schooling at a younger age rather than in less time.

The junior high school, however, is caught in a kind of "squeeze play" in these schemes. Its admission age is determined by the elementary school and the maximum number of senior high school credits it can offer in its program is fixed by the regulations over which it has no control. Unlike the arrangements in elementary and senior high schools, here acceleration can mean only reducing the time spent in completing a required course of study for graduation and school officials often balk at this alternative. The only other way out is to "enrich in depth," a strategy that is infinitely more difficult to conceptualize and execute than rapid coverage of existing subject matter.

Desirable as these various acceleration plans are, they nevertheless represent a

relatively "easy way out" of the problem of what educational nourishment should be offered the gifted. They are predicated on the fact that an able learner is a rapid learner and should, therefore, be exposed for a shorter time to the same content as are his less endowed schoolmates. Little account is taken of the qualitative differences in mental capacity that distinguish the gifted from the non-gifted and that suggest the need of a program uniquely suited to these abilities rather than just a telescoped version of an existing plan designed for average students. The superior mind can probably absorb not only conventional content faster but different kinds of content as well.

What these different kinds of offerings ought to be, and how they can best be taught, remains as yet unanswered. In fact, acceleration offers a convenient means of dodging the question in the first place.

Telescoping courses of study, or giving them earlier than is usual, are some of the ways in which schools are attempting to stiffen existing programs for the gifted, but by no means the only ways. Conant's admonition that high schools ought to discourage able students from shirking the heavy academic offerings in favor of easy electives that would enable them to get by with the least amount of effort has been well received. Last year Nassau County reported a survey that showed an increasing majority of high school seniors with IQ's of 115 and above enrolled in the stiff academic courses and completing considerably more than minimum requirements for graduation. A similar study in Schenectady, New York brought to light a sizable number of above-average students in non-academic pursuits, whose mediocre performance at school seemed to belie their high potential. This resulted in an intensive guidance and study program calculated to upgrade their scholastic standings and aspirations.

On the elementary school level, recent attempts to add weight to existing curriculum content has produced some administrative changes that may become revolutionary if the trend continues to grow. For the first time, perhaps, in elementary education's long history there is a serious threat to the so-called self-contained classroom where a single teacher is responsible for the total educational experience of young children. The gifted pose a particular problem for such teachers, few of whom are steeped enough in all subject matter areas to provide the necessary challenge in each of them. Specialists are therefore needed to fill appropriate gaps in the elementary program. In some instances, self-contained classrooms have been converted to co-ordinated classrooms with individual teachers designing the total program and inviting specialists to teach certain subjects. New York City, for example, has organized several experimental classes for the gifted which are visited by instructors responsible only for science, music, and foreign languages. Long Beach and Ossining have gone a step further by cutting down drastically on the meeting time of the self-contained classroom and restricting its areas of responsibility to the language arts and so-

cial studies. For science, mathematics, music, and art the children are regrouped according to ability across grade lines and come under the tutelage of specialists each of whom teaches no more than a single subject to several groups.

Besides creating many new administrative problems these changes have drawn sharp criticism from educators extolling the virtues of the self-contained classroom. However, those who have chosen to deviate from tradition claim that under some form of co-ordinated or departmental system of instruction a teacher's ignorance of subject matter need not deter the enrichment of elementary school programs for gifted children.

Trend #4: Community Scholars are Helping to Provide Enrichment

The service that scholars in the community can render toward educating the gifted has become increasingly realized by many schools. Local college instructors, industrial engineers, lawyers, and musicians are only some of the out-of-school specialists pressed into service at various times and places. In some cases they work with individual or small groups of students; in other instances they teach full classes. Their unique contribution is usually in a course of study that is highly specialized and that regular staff members feel unprepared to teach. Sometimes they are called in merely as consultants to modify and refine existing courses of study, in which case they work exclusively with faculty.

As might be expected, such a trend carries with it a gratifying promise of expanded learning opportunities for the gifted. It gives the school far more latitude in course planning and in-service training of licensed teachers as well as making rich use of community resources. Especially in rural areas where teachers with specialized training may not be able to reach all gifted youth needing their help, the guest scholar can play a vital role in nurturing talent. A well-known example in which this is actually the case is the Catskill Area Project that brings college instructors into contact with able youth widely dispersed in approximately a dozen schools. The Oneida County Program for able and ambitious students has also recruited specialists from local industry and the professions to enrich the curriculums in secondary education among several schools.

Though the impact of these community scholars has been particularly profound in rural areas, big cities are also making important use of them. In Monroe County the Wide Horizons Program exposes gifted youth and their teachers to instruction by faculty members from the University of Rochester. New York City likewise provides opportunities for able high school students to benefit from resources on the college campus as evidenced by special programs at Columbia, St. Johns, and Yeshiva Universities, among others.

This breakdown of barriers between school and the scholarly community promises an upgraded education for the gifted and, perhaps more important still, a strengthening of belief in academic en-

deavor as a prime objective of secondary schooling.

Trend #5: Mechanized Teaching and Early Instruction in Foreign Languages Benefit the Gifted

Perhaps the most rapidly growing instructional developments in recent years have been the introduction of new mechanical aids to teaching and the spread of foreign languages in the elementary grades. In some instances these materials and content have been used for enrichment purposes with the gifted alone; in other cases they have been offered to the non-gifted as well.

Televised instruction enables an inspiring teacher to reach many gifted children dispersed over a wide area who cannot be assembled to one spot each school day for such enrichment. Teaching machines show promise of transmitting certain rote skills to children more rapidly and efficiently than conventional methods. Language Laboratories offer an aural-oral approach to foreign languages instruction in the hope that students will thus develop greater facility with these unfamiliar tongues.

Many questions remain as yet unanswered regarding the new mechanical aids. Some of the problem areas are as follows: Does televised instruction do the job as well as live teaching? Should the television teacher work with a studio group during the program? Should the classes watching the program in far-off places be able to communicate with the teacher and with each other while instruction is going on? What are the strengths and limitations of teaching machines? Can they do more than teach rote skills? Can their programming principles be adapted to better advantage in live instruction? What can a language laboratory accomplish better than superior live teaching? These are some of the questions now being explored in various experimental programs, including those in Plainedge and Cortland (televised instruction), the Collegiate School in New York City (teaching machines), and at Sheepshead Bay and Abraham Lincoln High Schools, New York City (language laboratories).

With all of these devices there is the perennial danger of beguilement by gadgetry rather than a search for the educational messages they are supposed to transmit. It is well, therefore, to heed Arthur W. Foshay's warning that "We show signs of . . . reducing excellent communications media to mere gadgetry by taking the device as if it were the purpose, overlooking the fundamental nature of what is sent and what is received."

Hasty attraction to what is new and different can also vitiate the advantages of foreign language instruction in the elementary school. Where such a program is introduced in one of the grades without a plan for sequential development through the years the value of it is only fragmentary and fleeting. Children gain but a taste of foreign language for a year or two and then lose contact with it until high school. Unfortunately, this is often the case even in well-publicized programs of this kind. More planning is therefore needed to create a

meaningful experience over an extended period of time to reach toward vital, well-defined goals. Only then can early foreign language instruction become truly enriching for the gifted.

At least one school system (Hicksville) has taken a forward step toward clarifying its objectives and inaugurating a sequential program. Four years ago the first grades in the highest of a three track system were given an opportunity to study foreign languages throughout elementary school. Some children are expected to achieve no more than listening comprehension and speaking facility prior to entrance into the seventh grade. Others with greater ability should learn also to read and write, and the most advanced pupils will have an opportunity to delve into foreign literature in some depth.

Several aspects of this plan are soon to be tested rigorously and the outcomes should prove helpful to other schools undertaking such a program.

Trend #6: Most Gifted Youth Plan to Enter Fields of Science

A recent survey of able and ambitious high school students in Oneida County showed that an overwhelming majority of them chose science careers as their professional goals. These results substantiated findings of similar studies conducted elsewhere in the country.

This is not surprising in view of the glamour and importance attached to science today. The international arms race as well as the struggle to conquer space and disease make scientific discovery a matter of front-page concern. Contributors to advancement in this field enjoy the promise of fame, perhaps even fortune as well, and gifted students can hardly ignore the attraction. Why aspire to be a starving poet when a career in science offers prestige and security?

Certainly, many students with such plans haven't the ability or diligence to succeed. Nor is there a shortage of anything other than the most creative minds to advance scientific frontiers. Still, the modern day "gold rush" is on, with mastery of higher mathematics, physics, and chemistry replacing the precious metal as the coveted prize. One highly gifted ninth grader went so far as to equate science education with education in general when he suggested that if an era of world peace is ever achieved there will be no need to train scientists who could compete with their Russian counterparts and therefore no need for formal schooling at all.

Aside from the social and financial rewards, gifted students may also be captivated by the lure of scientific content and the way it is taught. Perhaps the greatest advances toward stimulating the agile mind have been made in science courses rather than in other areas of the curriculum. The content may be more difficult to master and better organized to challenge gifted students to put forth their best learning efforts. If so, subject matter specialists would do well to study the disciplinary qualities of science and suggest how other courses of study might be stiffened similarly.

With the growing proportion of academically talented students aspiring toward careers in science and technology,

and the resulting decreased proportion of such students leaning toward the humanities, one might ask what this implies in terms of the cultural flowering of America. One social analyst (Lilge) viewed with misgivings a similar trend in pre-World War II Germany and suggested that at least some of its militant nationalism was due to the great intellectual investment in science and technology which were used for power and conquest. According to this observer, the syphoning off of brainpower into these areas of learning weakened the humanist tradition that might have served as the nation's conscience. There may not be a deadly parallel in the consequences of America's increasing emphasis on science and technology, but the trend surely merits speculation as to what it may mean for this country's future.

Trend #7: Talent is Being Sought in Rural and Culturally Deprived Areas

The search for talent in rural districts and among culturally deprived groups has grown encouragingly in various parts of the State. Several large-scale projects are showing considerable progress in solving the problem of locating and nurturing talent among sub-populations that have produced disproportionately small numbers of able students in the past. Although much remains to be accomplished, a great deal of satisfaction can be derived from experiments in New York City, in Lewis County, and in the Catskill area.

The "P.S. 43" project in New York City has demonstrated that quality education *does* make a difference in the lives of children from lower socio-economic classes provided that all educational forces—guidance, instruction, remediation, work with parents, and an introduction to the cultural riches of the community—can be brought to bear on the problem. Such a "saturation" approach may be costly and difficult to design; still, the payoff seems worth the effort. The "P.S. 43" project was initiated as a talent search in one junior high school in a slum area but has had its salutary effects on the local senior high school to which the pupils are sent after graduation. A greater proportion of these students pursue academic courses today than ever before and college careers loom as real possibilities in their lives. Because of the success achieved thus far, the project is no longer just a talent search but an effort to improve the performance and aspiration of children on *all* ability levels. Some thirty-two elementary schools have been added to the experiment following the initial progress made at junior high school #43 in Manhattan, and the results of this move should be forthcoming shortly.

The Lewis County and Catskill area projects are also examples of encouraging efforts to enrich the education of able youth most of whom would normally have no access to cultural resources. To offset this handicap, these communities assemble their gifted from wide areas and offer them opportunities to delve into deep and provocative subject matter under the guidance of learned individuals carefully selected for

this task. Such experiences should open doors to a more exciting rural education than ever seemed possible for the gifted in remote areas.

Trend #8: More Schools are Planning Research on the Gifted

Without basic research on the nature and development of human faculties, and without concerted effort to evaluate educational innovation, the schooling of children and youth becomes victimized by guess work rather than proving itself a rich blend of science and art. Today's vastly improved research techniques, placed at the service of education, can help eliminate much of the bias and faddism that so often overcomes the educator. Objective, rigorous study can bring about enlightened decision making particularly at a time when every function of the school should be reassessed.

Happily, many educators are beginning to respond to the need for research on the nature and development of talent. They are seeking new ways of measuring the general and specific abilities of able students. The all-too-frequent problem of outstanding potential developing into mediocre accomplishments is still being investigated in various schools. Much remains to be learned about the advantages (if any) of various newly proposed enriched courses of study in the elementary and secondary grades. Nor is there a systematic account of what happens to talented children and youth, educationally, vocationally, personally, and socially after they graduate from our public schools. Just as in other sciences objective testing and evaluation follow close upon the heels of theory, so too, may education profit by following suit. Toward this end, the experimentation in local schools supported by a special fund in New York State, is proving to be a unique source of inspiration to educators everywhere. These investigations, many of which touch directly on some of the most meaningful problems of the talented, will someday yield important and lasting guidelines to administrative action.

In Conclusion

Brainpower is still regarded as a precious commodity, and its possessors are fair game for stockpiling and cataloguing. Much of the current demand for talent bears the ring of economic and political need rather than a concern for the self-fulfillment of gifted children and youth. Be that as it may, the educator today is playing a more central role in American life than ever before because of his service in keeping the nation's talent reservoir well-filled. Economists have an age-old maxim that whoever controls the things men must have controls the men who must have them. Surely the educator "controls" one of the most vital needs of the nation, namely, an enlightened citizenry and its precious sub-group of scholars, teachers, scientists, and creative artists. In an era when talent has become a vital ideological weapon, the very survival of our nation depends on how well we identify and nurture the high level consumers and producers of culture. Society asks the educator not only to exert leadership in transmitting to youth the

treasured ideas of western society but to control the flowering of great thought and discovery which are becoming ever more important elements in our national lifeblood. Needless to say, the sense of responsibility accompanying this control over what men must have can inspire some educators, but stagger others. There has never been a more appropriate time than now for each person associated in any way with the schooling of our youth to ask himself whether he has the inner resources to assume so much power and responsibility.

To live content with small means; to seek elegance rather than luxury, and refinement rather than fashion; to be worthy, not respectable, and wealthy, not rich; to study hard, think quietly, talk gently, act frankly; to listen to stars and birds, to babes and sages, with open heart; to bear all cheerfully, do all bravely, await occasions, hurry never. In a word, to let the spiritual, unbidden and unconscious, grow up through the common. This is to be my symphony.—WILLIAM H. CHANNING

What is a minority? The chosen heroes of this earth have been in a minority. There is not a social, political, or religious privilege that you enjoy today that was not bought for you by the blood and tears and patient suffering of the minority. It is the minority that have stood in the van of every moral conflict, and achieved all that is noble in the history of the world.—JOHN BALLANTINE GOUGH

Sylvan Sovereignty

David Kirby

Where, three and thirty years ago,
Corn in ordered ranks
Waved green or rip'ning blades to the wind,
The erstwhile plowman stood, at noon,
In the gloom of tall white oaks
And their cousins, the reds and blacks
Flanked by hickories, maples, beeches and birches.

Amazed, the plowman, now half a hundred years,
Gazed toward the sky, seeing only bits of blue
Through the lattice screen of leaves and boughs.
The soil which once his heavy share had turned
Grew maize, now trees.

The lifting winds had flung with lavish hand
Acorns, the gems of oak, the pyramids of beeches,
And the winged life of maple
On the scarred breast of mother earth.
The hickory survived the coulter and the plow,
And birch joined the succession.

Rain, sun and frost had a role—
The midwives of forest birth.
Wild Legumes, fixing nitrogen o'erlay the earth
And strove with infant growth for living light.
A carpet deep of leaves held water
Stored moisture for the land
And formed a dam against eroding floods.

The plowman closed his eyes.
His lips moved in prayerful hope
That he had no successor
That fire should not lay waste
The marvelous work.